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U.S. Reported Ready To Put Up 13 Million For Cuban Prisoners

Vol 4 Tractors

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DONOVAN

D.C. Allegedly Plans To Underwrite Shipment Of Medicine, Food If Captives Are Freed

ILA order given against handling 3 ships.....Page 2

Washington, Oct. 10 (AP)—The United States Government has agreed to underwrite the shipment of about \$13,000,000 worth of medicine and food to Cuba if invasion captives are released, informed sources said today.

Presumably this amount would be augmented by private subscriptions raised by the families of 1,113 men captured in the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion attempt of April, 1961.

\$62,000,000 Asked

Prime Minister Fidel Castro has reportedly asked for a total of \$62,000,000 in payment for freeing the prisoners.

There has been no indication whether James B. Donovan, New York lawyer, has been able to pare down this demand in negotiations which may be on the verge of success. Donovan is representing the families of the prisoners.

Whatever amount the Government contributes, there seemed likely to be volatile reaction in Congress toward the payment of what some members characterized as ransom.

Senator Williams, (R., Del.) and Senator Stennis (D., Miss.) told the Senate they are opposed to any ransom payment.

Williams said he "couldn't believe that the Government was taking a hand in the prisoner negotiations or that it would 'put up any substantial amount of the ransom.'"

Reported Argument

Stennis, a member of the Appropriations Committee, said he hadn't heard about the possibility that the Government would use any of its funds for this purpose.

It was learned, however, that about \$3,000,000 already has been appropriated which could be used for this purpose. There was a reported argument over whether an additional \$10,000,000 should come from Central Intelligence Agency funds or whether Congress should be asked to appropriate it directly.

Two House Republicans said they had wired President Kennedy demanding information about Government involvement in any payments to Cuba.

Representative Rhodes (R., Ariz.) asked for the "amount of money which has been, or will be, committed to the ransom from foreign aid appropriations, and the categories of aid from which such commitments have been, or will be, made."

"Payment Of Blackmail"

Representative Michel (R., Ill.) asked the President to say whether the Administration has "offered anything, through Donovan or otherwise, as payment or part payment of the ransom."

Representative Cramer (R., Fla.) objected, in a House speech, to the "payment of blackmail" to bail out the mistakes of this Administration in Cuba.

Rhodes questioned the legality of Donovan's action, telling the House "the only thing the President could have promised him is immunity from prosecution" for violating laws prohibiting private individuals from negotiating Government affairs with a foreign state.

Representative Pelly (R., Wash.) joined in the round of critical speeches, saying he objected to the "payment of ransom to anyone through the connivance of our Government."

News Story Denied

While the Kennedy Administration obviously hopes for release of the prisoners, it took steps to deny a news story in the New York World-Telegram and Sun that Donovan, the Democratic nominee for the Senate in New York, is acting as its agent in the negotiations.

The newspaper's story said that Donovan was asked by the Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy, last June to undertake the assignment. It said the President's brother told Donovan that the White House had a "moral obligation" to free the prisoners taken in an invasion this country permitted to go ahead.

Edwin Guthman, Justice Department information officer, quoted the Attorney General as saying the newspaper's story "is untrue."

"He did not see Donovan at the time Donovan was hired by the relatives of the prisoners to represent them," Guthman said. He added, in response to questions, that he was not seeing the Attorney General had not seen Donovan subsequently.

"Courtesy Calls"

Donovan has paid several of what he called "courtesy calls" on the Attorney General since June.

On at least one of the visits, Donovan was accompanied by a State Department specialist on Cuban affairs.

Dr. Jose Miro Cardona, president of the Anti-Castro Cuban Revolutionary Council, was an unannounced visitor to the Attorney General's office at least three times within a seven-day span earlier this year.

Despite what Guthman said, an informed member of Congress said Donovan is acting as an agent for the Administration in these negotiations, with the full approval of President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy.

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